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**Iran: Theater Security Cooperation Plan**

**by**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**23 April 2008**

## **Abstract**

### *Iran: Theatre Security Cooperation Plan*

The Theater Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP) is what links the Geographic Combatant Commander's (GCC) regional strategy to military operations. This paper examines the TSCP as it relates to Iran. It looks at the current challenges facing Iran as they relate to areas of possible cooperation between Iran and the United States. It identifies those areas most conducive to mutual cooperation. Once the most likely areas of mutual cooperation are identified this paper offers a prioritized list of operational objectives that best addresses them. Finally, this paper offers suggestions for specific operations that will accomplish the operational objectives.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The year is 2009, and there is a new President of the United States (POTUS) in office. This new administration has reevaluated U.S. relationships with several foreign countries considered hostile towards the United States or U.S. interests. With stability operations in the Middle East seemingly stalled, Iran is at the top of the list and is of special interest to the administration. Since the change of the U.S. administration, much of the anti-American rhetoric from Tehran has subsided. In fact, Tehran has even shown signs that they are open to improving relations between Iran and the United States. The new POTUS has determined that the current policy towards Iran has been ineffective and it is time for a change. He has decided to shift away from containment and move towards engagement. The President of Iran has rejected an invitation to the White House, and POTUS does not foresee himself traveling to Tehran anytime soon. However, POTUS does not want to lose this apparent opportunity to improve U.S. – Iranian relations.

Although the administration will not be ready to publish the new National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS) for some time, POTUS has already communicated his intentions to the Central Command (CENTCOM) Geographical Combatant Commander (GCC). POTUS has instructed the CENTCOM GCC to evaluate possible operations with which to engage Iran using Theatre Security Cooperation (TSC). POTUS also instructed the GCC that he would have the full backing of the administration. The GCC in turn ordered the CENTCOM J-5 Security Cooperation Division to develop recommendations to implement POTUS's new Theater Strategy with the intent to incorporate the recommendations into the new Theater Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP).

## **INTRODUCTION**

As recently as 1979, U.S. policy promoted Iran and Saudi Arabia as the “Twin Pillars” and guardians of U.S. interests in the Middle East. Iran, more than Saudi Arabia, embraced this policy and even, on behalf of the U.S. government, intervened militarily in Iraq and Oman to maintain stability in the region.<sup>1</sup> Iran still has the potential to be a pillar of stability in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). More importantly, regional stability is dependent upon Iranian cooperation. “Iran’s the 800-pound gorilla here. You can work around it and try to isolate it over its pursuit of the nuclear option, but let’s not kid ourselves here: we’re not going to establish a stable endstate in this strategic security environment without Iran’s participation. It’s as simple as that.”<sup>2</sup>

Iran occupies a key geostrategic position in the Middle East. Therefore, they must play a constructive role in Middle East security. Iranian cooperation will have to be won through engagement, and TSC is the main tool in CENTCOM’s toolbox that the GCC has to engage Iran. Historically, TSC has proven very effective in the region. There is no better example than that of Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, where prior TSC efforts resulted in 11 countries from the CENTCOM AOR contributing forces to the coalition, as well as securing basing and over-flight rights from others.

Although recent U.S. – Iranian relations have left few openings for TSC, openings still exist. The key to developing an effective TSCP is identifying the areas where Iranian and U.S. interests coincide and determining how to operationally engage those areas. Therefore, this paper will demonstrate that TSC is possible with Iran throughout the full range of TCS

activities including military – to – military contacts, multi-national training and exercises, education, Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) and security assistance.

### **UNDERSTANDING THEATER SECURITY COOPERATION**

TSC “is the means by which Department of Defense (DOD) encourages and enables countries and organizations to work with us to achieve strategic objectives. Security cooperation consists of a focused program of bilateral and multilateral defense activities conducted with foreign countries to serve mutual security interests and build defense partnerships.”<sup>3</sup> TSC is the most powerful tool available to the GCC for achieving theater strategy. TSC links that part of the GCC’s theater strategy involving military operations with other countries to U.S. strategic objectives.<sup>4</sup> “GCCs shape their AORs through security cooperation activities by continually employing military forces to compliment and reinforce other instruments of national power.”<sup>5</sup> Simply put, TSC defines the military’s role concerning non-combat interaction with foreign countries.

It is important to understand two things about TSC. First, TSC is inherently joint and, as stated above, TSC involves all elements of national power. Therefore, in many instances the military will not be the lead agent. For example, the military conducts security assistance operations, and the military’s role can range anywhere from simply advisory in nature all the way to conducting multi-lateral operations. In any case, the Department of State has oversight of all security assistance operations so, even though the military will most likely have the largest participation they will not be the lead agent.<sup>6</sup>

Second, TSC is not designed to be a quick fix. Instead, TSC is a long-term program that, in most cases, will only see incremental gains. TSC can be equated to a potter shaping a



vase out of clay. If the potter tries to force it or work too fast he will just end up with a mess, and it doesn't matter how far along the project is or how much time was invested, one mistake can mean starting all over again.

TSC is implemented through the TSCP and is comprised of five main parts: The Theater Situation Overview, the GCC's Mission Statement, Concept of Operations, and An Assessment to Date.<sup>7</sup> Since the purpose of this paper is not to write a new TSCP for CENTCOM, but to simply make recommendations specific to Iran, the Theater Situation Overview and the Concept of Operations are the only two sections of the TSCP this paper will address. The Theater Situation Overview will consist of a critical analysis of the following areas: History, Political Conditions, Social Conditions, Economic Conditions, and Iranian National Security. With an understanding of the challenges facing Iran, this paper will identify areas where engagement would be beneficial to both Iran and the United States. Finally, a prioritized list of Courses of Action (COAs) will be developed for possible inclusion into the Concept of Operations.

## **HISTORY**

Prior to the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, Iran and Saudi Arabia were the two pillars of stability and security for the U.S.'s Middle East foreign policy. That changed in February 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini toppled the U.S.-backed Shah, assumed the throne, and declared Iran an Islamic Republic.<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter, Iraq invaded Iran. During the ensuing war the United States, as well as many other nations, backed Iraq. Although the United States has never restored formal diplomatic relations with Iran, several opportunities have arisen for Iran and the United States to move closer together. Over the past quarter

century both states have indicated on several occasions that they were willing to work with each other. In 1989, President George H.W. Bush, in his inaugural speech said, “There are today Americans who are held against their will in foreign lands... Assistance can be shown here and will be long remembered. Goodwill begets goodwill,” implying better United States - Iranian relations if they helped obtain the release of hostages held by Hezbollah.<sup>9</sup> Iran assisted in the hostages release; however President Bush never moved to improve relations with Iran.

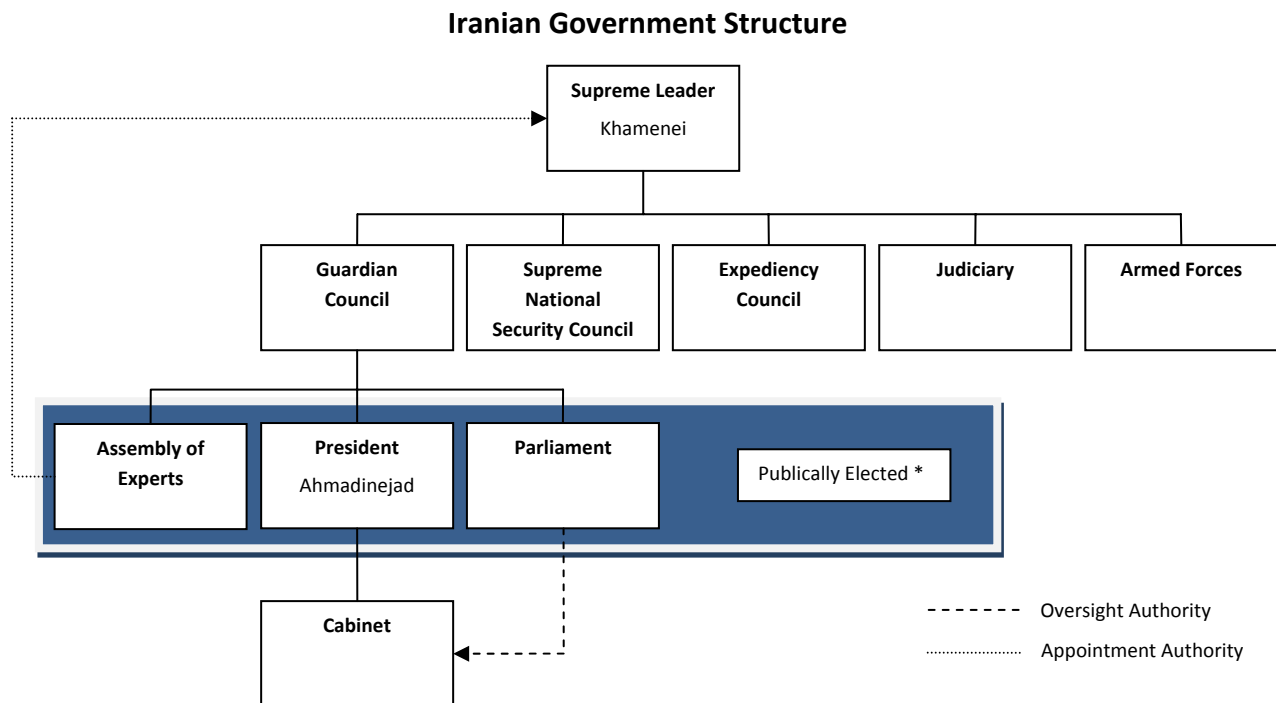
In 1997, the Clinton Administration offered Iran official dialogue with no substantive preconditions, but Iran refused direct talks. In March 2000, Secretary Albright acknowledged past meddling in Iran by the United States, and promised to try to resolve outstanding claims disputes, as well as ease some sanctions.<sup>10</sup> In September of the same year, at the “Millennium Summit” meetings, Secretary Albright and President Clinton attended Mohammad Khatami’s (The President of Iran at the time) speeches.<sup>11</sup> In politicalese, this was a huge signal that the United States was open to improving relations with Iran. Iran later reciprocated by assisting the United States in its war in Afghanistan. Iran offered search and rescue of any downed service members and the trans-shipment of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. However, in January 2002, President George W. Bush labeled Iran as part of the “Axis of Evil” in his inaugural speech beginning another freeze in U.S. – Iranian relations.

In examining recent U.S. – Iranian relations what is evident is that behind all the rhetoric Iran’s actions appear to be nothing more than a tit for a tat. Far from being unpredictable, Tehran’s actions appear to be a calculated response. Therefore, CENTCOM

should eventually receive a favorable response to any engagement operations the Iranian leadership determines are in Iran's best interest.

## POLITICAL CHALLENGES

In order to construct an effective TSCP, it is important to understand some key elements of the Iranian government structure. In Iran the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is, just as the title implies, the overall authority in the country. As illustrated in figure 1, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches are all subordinate to him.



\* Only those individuals approved by the Guardian Council may run for election

Figure 1

Khamenei is solely responsible for the direction of the country and Iran's foreign policy. Therefore, any TSCP operations must ultimately be acceptable to him. However,

even though Iran's ayatollahs are the exception, Shia ulama (religious leaders) do not traditionally involve themselves in politics.<sup>12</sup> This tradition still has a major influence on Khamenei who runs Iran through consensus (much like the CEO of a corporation) rather than decree. Iranian consensus comes mainly from three sources, the Guardian Council, the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), and the Expediency Council. The president and the parliament have some influence as well, but to a much lesser degree.<sup>13</sup> Within the consensus groups, there are a number of moderates and reformists providing openings for CENTCOM TSCP efforts.

The Iranian President holds the second highest-ranking political position in Iran. This is, as illustrated in figure 1, a distant second to Ayatollah Khamenei. It is important to note the relationship between the executive branch and the armed forces. Iran is the only state in which the executive branch has no control over the armed forces. This means that the president's views toward any TSCP operations involving the military only matter to the extent of the president's influence among the Guardian Council, the SNSC, and the Expediency Council. However, if the Iranian president comes from one of the branches of the armed forces, that president will likely have significant influence with at least parts of the armed forces. That was the case with the previous Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had served as an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commander.

The Guardian Council barred most of the reformist candidates from running in the 2004 elections that resulted in the hard-liners and conservatives in control of most of the government institutions. However, the 2006 elections showed a significant resurgence of the reformist movement in Iran. The Guardian Council prevented most reformists from running

for office at the national level, however, reformist candidates at the local level won by a landslide.<sup>14</sup> Since the GCC should initially focus most TSCP operations at the local level, having the moderates and reformers in office at the local level will prove beneficial.<sup>15</sup> Most recently, former Iranian reformist president Mohammad Khatami united 21 of Iran's pragmatist and reformist parties under one group with the mission to "reestablish the power of the parliament" and to "stop the government's dilettantism."<sup>16</sup>

## **SOCIAL CHALLENGES**

Iran is currently facing numerous social challenges ranging from human rights abuses to problems with rampant drug use. Although many of these areas may one day offer an opportunity for engagement, in the near term the social challenges most likely to be exploitable are Iran's rampant drug problem and the related HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium and in 2007 harvested a record 192,000 hectares of poppies equating to 93% of the world's supply.<sup>17</sup> With most of the harvest bound for Europe and the United States, the easiest route is over land through Iran. In fact, approximately 60% of the opium, morphine, and heroin produced in Afghanistan is smuggled through Iran.<sup>18</sup> Iran faces many of the challenges traditionally faced by countries adjacent to drug producing states.

Over the past few years, the drug trade has spawned an increase in organized crime in Iran.<sup>19</sup> As these crime organizations grow, so does the amount of illegal drugs flowing into cities like Tehran. Additionally, as the supply increases there is a corresponding decrease in price, leading to a product that is relatively cheap and widely available. Coupled with an unemployment rate as high as 20% a surge in drug addiction is the logical outcome.<sup>20</sup> In

fact, approximately 8% of the Iranian population is addicted to drugs, and the country has the highest per capita opiate use in the world.<sup>21</sup> Iran has also seen an upswing in the number of its citizens who are injecting heroin. Unfortunately, with little emphasis placed on education this has also led to a significant increase in HIV/AIDS infections.

Tehran understands that there are two methods to countering its drug problem; demand reduction and interdiction. Although Iran has implemented education and treatment programs over the past few years to help reduce the demand, last year the focus shifted significantly towards interdiction.<sup>22</sup> This shift has probably occurred for two reasons. First, education and treatment programs cannot address the root causes of the drug abuse problem, which are the high unemployment and poverty rates, and the oppressive regime policies. Second, investment in interdiction helps Iran combat its border security issues. The National Security section will discuss border security in more detail. However, it is easy to see that stopping the flow of drugs out of Afghanistan is one area that Iranian and U.S. interests overlap, and is an obvious area to focus cooperation efforts.

## **ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

For many reasons, which are beyond the scope of this paper, the Iranian economy has become dependent on oil export revenue. Iran's economy has been showing modest growth with last year's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increasing by 4.3%. However, their GDP growth did not meet the central bank projections of 7.5% growth. The shortfall in GDP growth is systemic of "poor economic management and ineffective governance."<sup>23</sup> The reality of Iran's economic status is that it is currently on the brink of collapse, and high oil

prices are the only thing currently sustaining the economy. A sudden drop in the price of oil could push Iran over the edge, which would likely lead to a failed state scenario.

To make matters worse, Iran's loss of oil revenue is not a matter of "if" but rather "when." Due to a lack of resources invested into the Iranian oil infrastructure, Iran struggles to maintain current output levels. In addition, domestic consumption continues to rise at double-digit rates. Iran also lacks refining capabilities. In fact, Iran imports approximately 40% of their refined petroleum.<sup>24</sup> They have contracted with Germany to build a new refinery, but without the capacity to pump more oil, it will simply reduce the amount of oil they can export.<sup>25</sup> Experts estimate that "Iran will have no more oil to export by around 2015 if it [does] not rein in [its] runaway consumption and reverse the long-term decline in its oil production."<sup>26</sup>

It is easy to see how a collapsed economy would destabilize Iran and the surrounding countries. TSC efforts are currently underway in Iraq to address a similar situation. Therefore, because U.S. and Iranian interests overlap here, Iran's oil infrastructure is an area in which CENTCOM should focus TSC efforts.

## **NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES**

Border security is one of Iran's greatest national security threats. Iran's border adjoins eight different states and totals 5,440km.<sup>27</sup> Most of these adjoining states have even less security than Iran. The lack of available security and the rugged geography combine to create a very porous land border. In addition, Iran has 2,440km of coastline to police.<sup>28</sup> As discussed earlier, 60% of the opiates produced in Afghanistan flow through Iran. In addition to drug traffickers, arms smugglers, terrorists, and refugees also take advantage of the porous

border. Iran has made a concerted effort to secure their border. In fact, Iran employs tens of thousands of troops and law enforcement personnel to patrol its borders at an expense of more than \$800 million per year.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, after years of weapons and parts embargos against Iran, these forces lack the training and equipment necessary to be truly effective.

As General Abizaid once said when he was the CENTCOM GCC, “We recognize that economic development, political development, and security are interdependent.”<sup>30</sup>

Interdependence applies not only to Iran, but also to the surrounding states. CENTCOM will not be able to achieve its goals of political and economic development in Iraq and Afghanistan without securing the borders between these two states and Iran. Experience has shown that such a task would be nearly impossible without Iran’s help. More importantly, Iran does not have a much better chance of securing its own borders without help from the governments of Iraq, Afghanistan, as well as that of CENTCOM.

Securing the borders between Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran, in an effort to combat the flow of illegal drugs, arms, terrorists, and refugees is of vital interest to Iranian national security. Border security is also essential for CENTCOM to achieve its regional objectives. Therefore, helping the Iranians with their borders security issues is an area CENTCOM should focus its TSC efforts.

## **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

According to the GCC, the current CENTCOM TSCP objectives are to “strengthen partner military capabilities, increase interoperability with US forces, encourage professional development, ensure access, and enhance intelligence and information sharing.”<sup>31</sup> With an understanding of the challenges and threats facing Iran, as well as the areas in which Iranian



interests (in regards to these challenges and threats) overlap with the interests of the GCC, a prioritized list of TSC objectives can be created. While TSC objectives focused on any of the areas identified would prove beneficial to both CENTCOM and Iran, it is important to remember that TSC is a two-way street. Therefore, the TSCP priority list should give higher priority to those objectives that are more likely to be acceptable to Iran rather than those objectives that might be of more benefit to CENTCOM. With that in mind, the GCC should consider the following list of operational objectives:

- 1) Enhance the Islamic Republic's armed forces (IRAF) and law enforcement capabilities in order to promote a secure Iranian border.
- 2) Enhance Iran's oil infrastructure in order to stabilize the Iranian economy and ensure a continued export capability.
- 3) Enhance IRAF and law enforcement capabilities in order to combat terrorist organizations within Iran.
- 4) Conduct operations in order to promote future access to Iran for CENTCOM forces.

### **ENHANCING IRANIAN SECURITY CAPABILITIES**

The one area where Iranian and CENTCOM interests overlap the most is in stemming the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan into Iran. In fact, it is in this area that Iran and the UNITED STATES have had the most cooperation over the past several years. CENTCOM has several TSC tools to select from when deciding on what counter-narcotics operations with which to engage Iran. These options range from information and intelligence sharing to Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs. The

problem is finding a place to begin. With Iran, the best place to begin is with existing relationships.

Iran has a good relationship with the government of Afghanistan. Iran supported the Northern Alliance and their fight against the Taliban and Iran has been actively involved in Afghanistan reconstruction efforts.<sup>32</sup> CENTCOM, in conjunction with the Afghanistan government, has established the Counter Narcotics-Terrorism (CNT) Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC) in Kabul. The IFC is designed to gather intelligence related to narcotics and terrorism from all intelligence sources including coalition partners. Additionally, the IFC is designed to provide training to host nation agents and build up their countries counter-narcotics capabilities.<sup>33</sup>

Including an Iranian cell in the IFC would be an excellent beginning point. Not only would the creation of an Iranian cell open up channels for information sharing it would also open up the opportunity to provide International Military Education and Training (IMET) to Iranian troops. Initially CENTCOM would conduct IMET at the IFC, and focus the training on counter-narcotics and counter terrorism. As support for the program grows, CENTCOM could expand the IMET program into other areas such as Counter-Drug Training Support (CDTS). The CDTS is designed to provide counter-drug training to light infantry, aviation (both fixed and rotary wing), coastal, riverine units, and staffs associated with counter-drug operations. Therefore, the CDTS can start as small as necessary (for example, a Special Operations Force (SOF) Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) training a riverine unit) and be expanded over time.<sup>34</sup>

The regional defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) should be another key component to CENTCOM's IMET engagement strategy with Iran. The CTFP is ideally suited to train foreign military officers and security officials in combating terrorism.<sup>35</sup> CTFP also trains foreign military officers and security officials to build and manage their own counter-terrorism programs. Most importantly, CTFP can be tailored to any level of engagement, from small regional level training up to resident programs in the United States.<sup>36</sup> The ultimate goal would be to expand IMET to include student education within military schools such as the different services' war colleges. At the war colleges, the real benefit would come from the exposure gained between the Iranian and U.S. students, as well as exposing them to democratic principles and international cooperation.

Before continuing, it is important to mention that Iran divides its military into two separate and distinct branches. The first branch is the IRAF, which is comprised of the nation's army, navy, and air force. The second branch is the IRGC. Although the IRGC would have little interest in working with U.S. forces because of their extremist views, it is possible Tehran will send IRGC members, at least initially, as their agents. CENTCOM's goal is to expand TSC operations long-term; therefore, it is important to work with whomever Iran provides. However, the long-term goal will be to build the capacity and relevance of the IRAF and diminish the influence and relevance of the IRGC.

As Tehran grows more comfortable, allowing Iranian forces to work with U.S. and / or other national forces, it will become possible to establish a more extensive training and cooperation program. One possibility could be modeled after the joint DOD / DEA program in Afghanistan, where CENTCOM is providing Mi-17 helicopters and training to develop the Afghanistan Counter-Narcotics Police Aviation (CNPA) capabilities. This program includes

sending Afghani pilots to Fort Bliss for training.<sup>37</sup> In addition, CENTCOM should invite Iran to join in multi-national training exercises focused on boarder security with Afghanistan and possibly Pakistan. CENTCOM should also plan an exercise focused on Iranian coastal security. Since up to 80% of the smuggled goods that enter Iran enter via unregistered ports and jetties, Iran should be open to participating in exercises centered on coastal security.<sup>38</sup> Coastal security exercises should focus, not only on port security and smuggling, but also on combating other seaborne threats such as piracy and terrorism. The Marine Corps' new Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF) is ideally suited to conduct an exercise of this type. With the SC MAGTF's flexible force size capability, CENTCOM can tailor the exercise to a size that makes Iran comfortable.<sup>39</sup>

### **FOLLOW-ON TSC OPPORTUNITIES**

Currently Iran views the United States as its greatest regional threat. A well-developed TSCP designed to develop a professional IRAF capable of securing Iran from external threats will slowly begin to change Iran's perception. As the leadership in Tehran gains more confidence in its regular armed forces and sees that cooperation with the UNITED STATES is beneficial, additional TSC opportunities will continue to present themselves. CENTCOM must be ready to take advantage of these opportunities as they become available.

Iraq will offer CENTCOM several early follow-on engagement opportunities with Iran. Much like Afghanistan, Iran has a friendly relationship with the government of Iraq, and because Iraq is the only other Shia dominated government in the world, Iran has a stake in seeing Iraq's government succeed. Iran and Iraq already have joint agreements to prevent

terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, the Mujaheddin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), from using each other's country as a base of operations.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, an early follow-on TSC objective for CENTCOM should be to conduct a multi-lateral exercise hosted by Iraq. This exercise should be SOF centric, and include Iraqi and U.S. SOF, as well as IRAF forces. It should focus mainly on anti-terror operations and training as well as improving coordination and communications between the three forces.

Iraq's oil infrastructure provides another engagement opportunity with Iran. Most of Iraq's proven oil reserves are located in their southern border region with Iran. Iran and Iraq are currently in negotiations for the joint development of those oil fields.<sup>41</sup> However, as discussed earlier, Iran's oil infrastructure has suffered from decades of neglect. CENTCOM currently has, Task Force (TF) RESTORE IRAQI OIL (RIO), operating in Iraq to repair and modernize Iraq's oil infrastructure to ensure continuity of operation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), in conjunction with Brown & Root Services under the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP), are responsible for making those repairs and upgrades to Iraq's oil infrastructure.<sup>42</sup> CENTCOM could easily expand TF RIO to include the joint oil fields of Iraq and Iran. In addition, the U.S. ACOE should include Iranian engineers in training programs set up to train Iraqi engineers to make future infrastructure repairs and upgrades.

Finally, as a result of the previous TSC efforts, CENTCOM will enable opportunities to achieve the last operational objective - promoting access to Iran for CENTCOM forces. Iran is unique in the Middle East. Although U.S. relations with the Iranian government have been hostile for decades, the Iranian population is arguably the most pro-west of all of the Middle East states. As explained earlier, this popularity extends to the local government as

well. Therefore, the challenge for the GCC is to build support for U.S. engagement at Iran's national level without losing support at the local level. Initially, two operational options will achieve these objectives.

First, plan for and be prepared to execute Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operations in Iran. In the past CENTCOM has conducted limited HA/DR in Iran. One example of these operations was the 23 December 2003 earthquake in Iran, where CENTCOM delivered medical supplies and blankets, via C-130, to aid the victims.<sup>43</sup> However, Iran's greatest threat from natural disaster is flash flooding. In the '90s Iran suffered nearly 14 flash floods a year on average. Many of these floods affected hundreds of thousands of people.<sup>44</sup> As engagement opportunities expand, CENTCOM must be prepared to, and act on, any HA/DR opportunity Tehran agrees to.

Second, there must be civil – military engagement at the local level. Here the GCC must maintain a balance between the people and the government. Although engagement with both is critical, it is important that these operations do not appear to the national government as inciting the people against them, and it cannot appear to the people that the United States is siding with the government to keep them repressed. If the people start to develop this perception, their anger towards their government will be redirected at the United States.

## **CONCLUSION**

TSC engagement with the Islamic Republic of Iran is possible. It is the key to rebuilding a working relationship with Iran. The TSC process is slow and realistic expectations have to be maintained. The challenges facing Iran and the areas where U.S. and Iranian interests overlap need to be identified. With those areas of overlap identified, the

GCC can develop operational objectives to address them. However, TSC requires cooperation from both parties, and operational priority must be given to those areas where Iranian officials will be receptive to engagement, rather than giving priority to those areas of highest interest to the United States. The GCC can then produce a prioritized list of TSC objectives and develop a realist TSCP.

In order for a TSCP to be effective, it must initially be focused at the lowest levels. Through low-level engagements, that are beneficial to both parties, levels of trust will increase and open up additional engagement opportunities. Iran's counter drug problem is an ideal area to focus initial operations. Through simple information sharing operations, the GCC will establish mutually beneficial relationships and trust. Other engagement opportunities will open up after relationships and trust have been established including cooperation in border security, counter-terrorism, and counter smuggling operations.

Middle East security is dependent on Iranian cooperation. A well developed TSCP will ensure that Iran once again takes its place as one of the "two pillars" of peace and security.

## NOTES

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<sup>4</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 September 2006), I-6.

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<sup>6</sup> Clarence J. Bouchat, *An Introduction to Theater Strategy and Regional Security*, Letort Papers (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, 16 August 2007), 21, <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/> (accessed 21 March 2008).

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, “The Man Between War and Peace,” *Esquire*, 11 March 2008, <http://www.esquire.com/print-this/features/fox-fallon/> (accessed 12 March 2008).



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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 569.

<sup>23</sup> Samantha Fang, “Tentative Steps: Ahmadinejad’s Economic Reform,” *Harvard International Review* 29, iss. 3 (Fall 2007), 13, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 15 March 2008).

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